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ABSTRACT

A collection of activities is presented for use at home to foster cooperative attitudes and build social skills. The activities are aimed at strengthening the cooperative bond in a family and giving family members practice in the skills needed to cooperate effectively. This handbook explains the cooperative learning concept, outlines the rules for an effective cooperative learning experience, suggests ways in which parents can improve cooperation at home, and describes cooperative activities. The cooperative activities are organized into five categories. "Kitchen Projects" includes "Things We Do Together," "Vacation Collage," "Baker's Clay Ornaments," "The Best and The Worst," and "Cleanie Meanies." "Reading and TV Viewing" covers "Family Reading Time," "Reading Aloud," "Making Books," and "Careful TV Viewing." "In The Car" suggests the following activities: "Travel Games," "Round Robin Stories," "The How Would You Feel Game," and "Family Trip Poster." "Outdoors" focuses on "Making Games Cooperative," "Harvest Time," "In the Garden," and "Snow Play." A section called "Family Meetings" describes how to conduct a family meeting and suggests topics which can be discussed at family meetings, such as family outings, working together as a team, sharing responsibilities, and identifying admirable qualities of family members' "favorite person." (JDD)

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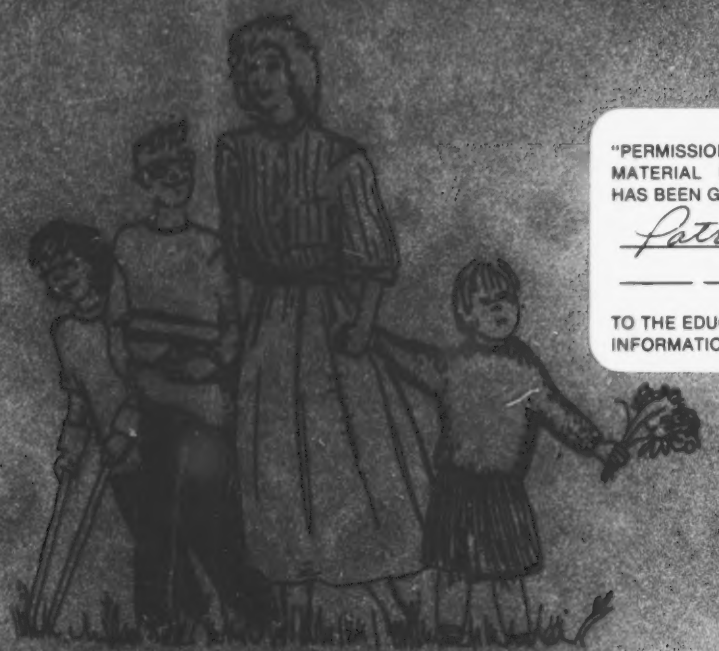
Cooperative Activities for the Home

Parents Working With Teachers To Support Cooperative Learning



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Cooperative Activities for the Home

Parents Working With Teachers to Support Cooperative Learning

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California State Department of Education
Special Education Division
Program, Curriculum, and Training Unit
Sacramento, California
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Preface

In 1981, the Special Education Resource Network (SERN) invited two people from the University of Minnesota to speak to the SERN staff about their ideas for how to help students with learning disabilities succeed in the classroom. David and Roger Johnson came and spoke about their research, development and experiences with teachers, students, and parents. At the end of the first day, the SERN trainers saw the exciting opportunities for Cooperative Learning for *all* students in California. By the end of the training, SERN staff had made arrangements with the Johnson's for more training and continued communication and work with Cooperative Learning. The Educational Specialists and Parent Specialists began to work with the Johnsons and with others, to take their experiences and share them with interested educators in California classrooms.

Taking the initiative, SERN Educational Specialists together with the Parent Specialists (themselves parents of students with special needs) conceived of a collection of activities that might be used at home to foster a cooperative attitude and build social skills. These activities allow parents and others at home the opportunity to experience cooperative activities with their children, while teachers are also working on cooperation at school.

This book is only one part of what is available for parents. There are other ways in which parents can support the use of Cooperative Learning. Talk with the teachers who are using Cooperative Learning and ask them what they would suggest. SERN has developed other resources for parents to learn about this process and the successes it offers students.

Continued

Welcome to Cooperative Learning! Join with those who are realizing the potential and the benefits for students. Cooperation does make the difference for all of us.

Steve Johnson
Director, Resource Service Center
Special Education Resource Network

Acknowledgements

This guide for parents was conceived by the 1986 Cooperative Learning Task Force of the Special Education Resource Network. Led by chairperson Denise Schultz, the Task Force saw a need for parents whose children were involved in Cooperative Learning in the classroom to understand the principles of Cooperative Learning and ways they could encourage cooperation at home. As a member of the Task Force, SERN Parent Specialist Audray Holm has enthusiastically promoted this effort.

Many of the cooperative activities included in this booklet were suggested by The Child Development Project and the parents of the San Ramon School District. SERN Parent Specialist Linda Wurzbach assisted in this effort.

Our appreciation goes to the SERN coordinators and educational specialists who have helped in the review of the guide. Jill Rivers, Lynn Carlisle, Bev Doyle, Don Kairott and Steve Street gave their valuable insight. Also assisting were the following participants on the SERN Cooperative Learning Task Force: Leslie Mauerman, Margot Rowley, Rookie Hirsch, Diana Zapata, Terry zumMallen, Donna Costello, Yvonne Sanders, Marie Stefanisko, Brian Leung and Britt Vasquez.

Special thanks go to Steve Johnson, Director of the Resource Service Center, for his enthusiastic support and guidance. Jim Hunt contributed all the graphics for the booklet as well as designing the layout. Candy Anasoff diligently entered all the word processing data. The delightful illustrations were done by Marjorie Jassowski.

Thanks also go to Roger and David Johnson of the University of Minnesota for their tenacious support and encouragement.

Pat Winget
Resources in Special Education

What Is Cooperative Learning?

Cooperative Learning is a powerful tool in the classroom and can be beneficial in the home as well. Instead of rows of desks and chairs in which students compete against each other or learn on their own, students of different abilities, sex, race, and levels of social skills work together in carefully structured groups to accomplish a single task. Students are taught both academic *and* social skills within the context of this supportive group and learn to care about each others' learning.

Public demands that students not be separated by racial, language, or physical differences have created classrooms of children with a great variety of abilities, lifestyles, and backgrounds. This can create a difficult situation for a teacher who must try to find ways to help students to work together. Cooperative Learning is a method that creates a successful learning environment for all of these children: disabled and nondisabled youth, minority and majority students, and students of varying cultural backgrounds.

Cooperative Learning is an effective teaching strategy in the classroom whose principles can be applied in the home as well. This booklet explains ways in which this technique can be used to promote cooperation among family members. First it is important to understand how a classroom teacher applies Cooperative Learning teaching strategies.

Initially, a classroom lesson is introduced to the entire group. After checking for their understanding, the students are guided through a task which must be completed by the group they are assigned to. Each member of the group has a specific role. For example, one student may read the material, another may encourage group responses, one might record the answers, while another praises individual efforts. Another type of cooperative lesson is one in which the students divide up the work. The teacher may give one

Continued

student the scissors, one the glue, one the paint, and another the glitter to create a joint art project. The goal is that each member contributes to the end product and that each member is responsible for helping others in the group.

While it is important that students learn to work alone, it is just as important that they learn to work with others. In Cooperative Learning groups students learn how to give and receive help. As adults they will need these skills to obtain and keep a job. Research shows that 90% of people who lose jobs, lose them due to poor social skills, not technical skills.

Numerous research studies conducted over the past ten years have supported the use of Cooperative Learning in developing appropriate interpersonal skills among students. A national survey of American business leaders found that most employers interviewed valued character traits of "getting along well" over academic skills. The Committee for Economic Development (1985) reported that schools should teach the "invisible curriculum" of teamwork, honesty, reliability, self-discipline, and "learning how to learn." These are all goals of Cooperative Learning strategies.

As a result of working in Cooperative Learning groups, research has shown that students:

- Learn more
- Enjoy learning and school more
- Get along better with other students
- Feel better about themselves and others
- Appreciate the teacher and principal more.

This effective teaching and learning strategy is being used in more and more schools throughout the nation as teachers and administrators learn of its success.

Who Needs Cooperation?

by Roger T. Johnson and David W. Johnson
Cooperative Learning Center
University of Minnesota

People are a gregarious species. They need each other and always have. This have been evident as people have gathered into tribes, communities, societies and especially in families. The goal of the society through its schools is essentially the same as the goal of the family: The child growing up will develop the values of the community and the skills needed to become an active, productive part of the community. There is not a more important set of skills than knowing how to link up successfully with other people and maintain those relationships over time. Children should walk away from their schools and families ready to continue to build friendships, ready to build a successful marriage and family, skillful enough interpersonally to work effectively in a job with other workers, and ready to contribute to the broader society. It will take increasingly more skill in cooperating with others effectively to be able to build a productive role in the larger community in the future.

Years ago, when families lived on farms and worked together, had meals together, and interacted constantly, there was a lot of cooperative skill building in the family itself. Now schools have inherited more of the responsibility for developing cooperative skills than they have in the past. As the work of the parents has become more and more removed from the home, mealtimes together have become scarce, hide-and-seek has been replaced by television, and interactions in the home less abundant and lower in quality. There is a need to build productive cooperative work into the school setting and Cooperative Learning groups are being used by many excellent teachers who have examined the research pointing out that cooperative work is more productive and satisfying than having students work alone without peer support in competitive or individualistic classrooms. The time is past due to examine the life of children at home and consciously build a stronger, cooperative atmosphere around the home as well.

Continued

This set of activities is aimed at strengthening the cooperative bond in a family and giving family members practice in the skills needed to cooperate effectively. It may be one of the more important goals for families now and in the future. There is a set of pragmatic rules that has developed around a cooperative experience that needs to be carried into each one of these experiences :

1. **Productive work groups are usually small**. Pairs are a good size to work in although you can share and give support in larger groups. On the activities that require work, it would be wise to pair up people for jobs so that they can model for each other and give feedback. Some jobs can use a division of labor where each person has a separate job to do suited to his or her age level, but whenever you can, think of pairs. Sharing groups can include the whole family after the work is done, or at mealtimes, in a car or celebrating at an ice-cream parlour.

2. **There has to be a clear *group goal* that every family member understands and accepts**. The question for a cooperative activity is "What are *we* supposed to do?" (not "what am *I* supposed to do?") The "sink or swim together" understanding that none of us can be successful unless all of us are successful is not just a nice thing to have in a cooperative endeavor, it defines the activity as cooperative (or not). It is important to clarify what *we* are trying to accomplish with all group members before beginning the activity or task. If there is some reluctance to accept the group goal, you may want to add a group reward that everyone appreciates and is not available unless the shared, family group goal is accomplished.

Continued

3. **It is also vital that everyone accomplish their part of the job and feels that s/he contributed to the cooperative effort.** Even the youngest or most reluctant members need to be involved and be individually accountable within the cooperative task. Sometimes assigning roles to young members of the family like being the "counter" and keeping track of the things picked up and put away in the garage is enough. (It also helps their counting.) Everyone contributes and belongs. No one gets a free ride.

4. **It may be important to point out and discuss the specific behaviors that help get the job done and bring the family closer together as a cooperative unit.** It is important to teach siblings (and parents?) that a cooperative group functions better when its members are getting supportive comments than when they are getting abuse or "putdowns." A discussion where supportive comments are listed in the words that the family members want to use and abuse is "off limits" can get you started. Then it is always a good idea to have family members occasionally count the number of supportive comments they receive and subtract the number of putdowns they receive to get a score (that may mean points for a favorite restaurant or some other reward). If the family gets into the habit of giving support during cooperative activities it may well spill over into other times as well. Some of the behaviors that might fit are:

    a. encouraging and supporting
    b. summarizing accurately
    c. counting accurately (target behaviors)
    d. cheerful work (will need to be defined)
    e. timing (self and group)

Continued

f. asking for help when needed
g. giving help when asked
h. listening with care (eye contact and paraphrasing in own words to clarify)

The best way to use an idea book like this is to select the activities you like best and change them to fit your situation even more. It may seem odd to have to structure cooperative activities into a family where cooperation is taken for granted, but maybe that is where cooperation needs to be structured most carefully (*where it is taken for granted).* Keep in mind the following checklist:

- Do we have a shared group goal that is understood and accepted by all of us? (Group reward?)
- Are we each taking part in the task and contributing?
- Are we practicing the behaviors that make a cooperative group work?

Good luck!

How Can Parents Improve Cooperation at Home?

The first cooperative group children participate in is the family. Cooperation is an important part of successful family life. Talking with each other, planning meals or weekend activities, and solving problems are all a part of being a family. Children need to be given a share in the division of chores and responsibilities so that the success of the family depends not only on the parents but on all members.

> *"We sink or swim together," explain David and Roger Johnson, leading researchers in the field of Cooperative Learning.*

A sense of belonging can occur in families even though everyone is different. All family members must feel that they bring something unique and important to the family group. The combination of the parts make the family what it is. The success of the family depends on the success of each person in the family be there two members or twenty members.

It is not enough that your child's teacher works to develop cooperation among students in the classroom. At home, parents too can see to it that each member of the family has a vital role to play in its day-to-day living and that each member's part is valued.

This booklet provides activities that can be done as a family to encourage the development of cooperative skills. These activities are generally effective with children from toddlers to teenagers. Activities have been selected to help children learn cooperation and also help them appreciate positive behavior in general.

For example, the activity "Sharing Responsibilities" is designed to show families how to work together to complete household chores. The reading and television activities are more complex. They not only reinforce the cooperative behavior but also involve children in learning about the positive and negative behaviors of others.

Continued

Activities that foster cooperation can be used anytime during the day. When making cookies, for instance, each child can be given a specific ingredient to add to the batter. Each child may have a certain job to do: one may measure, one may stir, one may put it into the oven. And everyone gets to spoon the dough onto the baking sheet and have a taste!

Social skills and values begin at home. These skills are needed for children to interact positively and effectively with others outside of the family. Caring about others, listening to what people have to say, taking turns, and accepting ideas are all social skills. The social skills and values parents develop in their children affect the school and community.

This booklet provides the stepping stones to encourage cooperation in the family at home, in the kitchen, outdoors, and wherever members work and play together.

Now let's try out some activities!

Cooperative Activities

Kitchen Table Activities

Things We Do Together
Vacation Collage
Baker's Clay Ornaments
The Best and the Worst
Cleanie Meanies

THINGS WE DO TOGETHER

Purpose: Families keep a picture album of their cooperative adventures.

Procedure: 1. Make or purchase an album for keeping photos, pamphlets, ticket stubs, drawings, etc. A loose leaf binder to which pages can be added would do nicely.

2. As cooperative adventures occur, take or draw pictures, keep momentos, and write what happened. Older children can serve as photographer, historian, or writer on an alternating basis for each adventure.

3. The album can be used as the basis of discussion when planning new cooperative activities. Questions may include:

a. What did you like best about this last project?
b. What could we have done better?
c. Who will be responsible for pictures? For the story?

Note: Even young children can "tell the story" for each activity with an older person writing down what they say. ■

Adapted from: *The Child Development Project, San Ramon, CA.*

VACATION COLLAGE

Purpose: Family members create a plaster of paris collage using objects found during their vacation.

Procedure: Ingredients: sand, water, found objects, plaster of paris, large cans, stirrer, large cardboard box, newspaper.

1. During the vacation (or trip to the beach or mountains) remind family to collect items to put in the collage, e.g., small shells, oddly shaped stones, driftwood, pieces of bark.

2. Before making the collage in its final form, decide as a group how big to make it, where to place each object, and who will do each task (mixing, placing objects, pouring plaster, cleaning up).

3. Protect floor working area with newspapers and place cardboard box containing 2-3 inches of damp sand on them. Take turns placing your found objects in the sand. (Remember, the side facing up will be covered with plaster and the side in the sand will show.)

4. Prepare the plaster of paris making a mixture the consistency of thick pancake batter. Pour over the objects and sand and let dry completely. Gently remove the dried plaster and brush off excess sand with a soft paintbrush.

Continued

5. During the work, discuss and highlight how decisions are made, how ideas are used, how people feel about working together, how people feel about the end results, and new ideas for the next collage. ■

BAKER'S CLAY ORNAMENTS

Purpose: Create a sense of family tradition by making your own holiday ornaments.

Procedure: 1. With children make Baker's Clay. The recipe follows. To ensure cooperation, ask each person which jobs they would like to do.

2. All members of the family can make ornaments of various shapes or symbols of the season. These can be hand molded, cut with a knife, or cookie cutters can be used. Be careful that ornaments are not too thin or they may break.

3. If you wish to hang these, be sure that each one has a hole at the top. After they are baked or dried, a loop of string can be tied through the hole.

4. Decorate the ornaments with paint, cotton, sequins, etc. You can scratch in designs with a nail.

Note: These ornaments will last for years if stored carefully and can be added to each season. It's fun to identify who did each one over the years and see how children's products and ideas change.

Continued

Recipe for Baker's Clay:

1. In a mixing bowl, mix:

   2 cups flour
   2 cups salt
   1/2 cup (or more) hot water
   1 tablespoon powdered alum

2. Add a teaspoon of cooking oil and some food coloring (if you want colored dough).

3. Model flat shapes or three-dimensional objects. Work on waxed paper.

4. Let ornaments dry for several days. You can speed up the drying by putting them in a 250° oven for about 3 hours.

For more ideas on cooperative art projects, see:

Frank Marjorie. *I Can Paint a Rainbow.* Nashville, TN: Incentive Publications, 1976.

Silberstein-Storfer, Muriel with Mablern Jones. *Doing Art Together.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983. ■

THE BEST AND THE WORST

Purpose: Each member of the family has a chance to share their feelings and concerns.

Procedure: During dinner, each family member gets a chance to share the best thing that happened that day and the worst thing. For example, Jimmy may share that he had a good talk with his best friend at school, but that he forgot to study his spelling words and failed the spelling test. Dad might share that he enjoyed a pleasant conversation with his mother on the phone today for his best happening, but the worst thing was that he did not finish a project that was due today.

Note: This is a great activity to get kids to reveal their feelings about what's happening in their worlds. It is also an opportunity for kids to learn that parents also have their ups and downs and are willing to share them. Family cooperation is developed through the process of listening to each other, sharing feelings, and encouraging each other. ■

CLEANIE MEANIES

Purpose: To get the entire house cleaned in a minimum of time with each family member doing their part.

Procedure: On a Saturday or Sunday morning, when everyone is available, meet in the kitchen (or wherever) and divide up the chores. Decide who is to clean the bathroom, the kitchen, bedrooms, etc. and what is to be thrown out. Help can be provided for the little ones. Then get your radios blaring and go to it!

When all is cleaned, reward yourselves to a brunch on the town and come home to a sparkling clean home.

Variation: To insert some adventure into housecleaning, everyone can dress up in aprons and bandanas and sing something like "Whistle While You Work." You can attach more interesting names to different rooms in the house. For example, "The Jungle" can be Danny's room, "The Queen's Chamber" might be Mom's bedroom, and Jamie's room might be called "Wonderland."

Chores can be assigned by drawing room names out of a hat until everyone receives an assignment they are happy with. Family members can even give themselves fantasy roles such as "Snow White" or "The Pied Piper" if it makes housecleaning more enjoyable.

Continued

Adapted from: Lappe, Fancis Moore and Family. *What To Do After You Turn Off The TV.* New York, NY: Balantine Books, 1985.

Kitchen Table Activities

Note: This chart suggests chores appropriate for children at different ages. ■

Chores Your Child Can Do

xxx Children at these ages *may* be able to perform chore
--- Children at these ages *should* be able to perform chore

Ages at which chores can be done

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Wash dishes				xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	---	---	---
2. Pick up belongings (toys, clothes)	xxx	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
3. Clean room, minimally			xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	---	---	---	---	---
4. Feed pets		xxx	xxx	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
5. Mow the lawn							xxx	xxx	---	---	---
6. Vacuum					xxx	xxx	xxx	xx	---	---	---
7. Clean the bathroom				xxx	xxx	xxx	---	---	---	---	---
8. Wash clothes using washing machine						xxx	xxx	xxx	---	---	---
9. Set or clear the table				xxx	xxx	---	---	---	---	---	---
10. Make bed					xxx	xxx	xxx	---	---	---	---
11. Help mother or father with a variety of chores	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
12. Baby-sit younger siblings for brief periods									xxx	---	---
13. Cook meals								xxx	xxx	---	---
14. Make lunch for school					xxx	xxx	---	---	---	---	---
15. Sweep floors						xxx	xxx	---	---	---	---

Note: The age provisions on this chart apply to most children. If your child is special, because of a physical or mental handicap, you should seek professional advice regarding the best time to implement chores. Children vary in the timing of their development, and you need to consider those things your child can do comfortably. There aren't any "good" or "bad" chores; it's most important that your child be expected to do *something*.

Adapted from Clemes, H. and Bean, R. *How to Discipline Children Without Feeling Guilty*. Sunnyvale, CA: Enrich, 1980. Used with permission.

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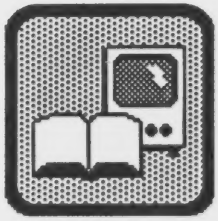
Cooperative Activities



Reading and TV Viewing

Family Reading Time
Reading Aloud
Making Books
Careful TV Viewing

FAMILY READING TIME

Purpose: To help children recognize cooperative behavior by reading books that illustrate this behavior with characters that are helpful and considerate.

Procedure: 1. Set aside a time for reading each day. Choose books that provide positive examples of prosocial behavior.

2. Depending on the ages of children, encourage each child to take turns reading.

3. Allow five or ten minutes at the end for such questions as:

a) What did the characters do that was helpful (kind, cooperative, etc.)?
b) What did you admire about the characters? Why?
c) Which character was your favorite? Why?
d) Do you want to be like the characters in the story? Why?

Note: Research evidence suggests that reading aloud to children has a positive effect on their later skill at reading. ■

READING ALOUD

Purpose: To enjoy each other's company and a good story while doing some of the mundane tasks of daily life.

Procedure: When Mom is making dinner or Dad is cleaning the dishes, one of the children can read a story to help pass the time. Or, to keep Kurt company when he is picking up his room, Sean may tell him of Charlie Brown's latest escapades. Even a task such as painting the family room can be pleasant when an exciting adventure story is being told. Uncle Charlie retiled his entire bathroom while various members of his family read him *Captains Courageous*.

Note: An excellent resource of additional ideas is:

Trelease, Jim. *The Read Aloud Handbook*. New York: Penguin Books, 1982. ■

MAKING BOOKS

Purpose: To create a sense of ownership for a group project.

Procedure: Adults and children of all ages delight in creating their own books. A book can be anything from a collection of drawings to a compilation of poems. Here are some ideas to try:

1. *Dictated stories:* Children can dictate stories to older brothers or sisters to write. Children can draw their own illustrations or use stencils to help them draw.

2. *Illustrations:* Photographs can be used in addition to drawings with a line or two of explanation added.

3. *Alphabet books:* Older brothers or sisters love to make alphabet books for their younger siblings. Put a letter on each page. Add a word, a line, even a story or poem to go with it. Young children can help provide the illustrations.

4. *Original books:* For those with a more literary inclination, original poems, stories, plays or even comics can be compiled into a family or neighborhood booklet. Character sketches of each member of the family with drawn portraits make a wonderful book to treasure for years. Poem compilations can be silly or serious. Everything takes on a permanence once it is bound.

Continued

5. *Revised classics:* Books can also be rewritten. Take an old family favorite (or one you dislike) and change it to suit you. You can cut out the pictures and rearrange them to your liking, glueing them on clean sheets of paper. Change the text if you wish—this is your creation!

Note: For information on how to bind your book for that professional look, see:

Judy, Susan and Stephen. *Gifts of Writing.* New York, NY: MacMillan 1980.

Tschudi, Susan. *The Young Writer's Handbook.* New York, NY: Scribners, 1984. ■

CAREFUL TV VIEWING

Purpose: To enable the family to recognize of the negative behaviors that are shown on T.V.

Procedure: 1. Explain that as a family, you are going to keep track of aggressive and negative behavior on the television programs you watch, and that everyone will have a chart to check off behavior as they watch T.V.

2. Discuss what each person considers to be aggressive and negative behavior and make a chart from the list compiled together, e.g., destroying property, biting, calling names, laughing at someone, etc. Put specific examples into larger categories (for example, hitting, pushing,and shooting can all be put in a "violence to others" category, while threats, putdowns, and yelling can all be put in a "being mean to others with words" category).

3. Decide on the length of time that the family will record behaviors (one day or more).

4. Give each person a chart consisting of a grid with the behavior categories running down the left side of the page, and spaces to write in the names of the T.V. shows actually watched running across the top of the page. (See example on the following page). Then, each viewer checks the appropriate box each time a negative behavior is observed. Fill in the chart together for one or more shows as practice, until everyone can use it appropriately. Young children should be given charts that show the actions of stick figures to represent simplified categories of behaviors.

5. When the program is over, talk about some of the behaviors observed. Be sure to describe what the positive behavior was as well as why it was positive (i.e., What were the effects on other people?)

Questions:

1. How did the family members feel about what they saw?

2. Did they expect their results? Why?

3. What do they think about how people treated each other on TV?

4. Do they think it should be different? Why?

5. How could they rewrite the scenes so the characters would interact more positively?

BEHAVIORS	TV SHOWS		
	Our Home	Cosby Show	Family Ties
Being nice to others with words (praises, smiles, pats on the back).			
Being helpful to others (helping with chores, teaching and sharing).			
Laughing together telling the truth even though it's hard.			
Respecting other people's property.			

Note: This same procedure can be used to recognize negative behavior on TV, and the frequency of negative and positive behaviors can be compared.

Continued

Reading and TV Viewing

Note: For more ideas on careful TV viewing, see:

Kaye, Evelyn. *The A.C.T. Guide To Children's Television, How To Treat TV with TLC.* Boxton, MS: Beacon Press, 1979.

Singer, Dorothy G. and Jerome L., and Diana Zuckerman. *Teaching Television: How To Use TV To Your Child's Advantage.* New York: The Dial Press, 1981. ■

Adapted from: Singer and Singer, *TV Guide*, June 12-18, 1982.

Cooperative Activities

In the Car

Travel Games
Round Robin Stories
How Would You Feel?
Family Trip Poster

TRAVEL GAMES

Purpose: Family members play cooperative games while traveling.

Procedure: 1. Explain that the main objective is to work as a group by keeping a total family score or by working together to beat a time limit (e.g., How many red barns can we spot before we stop for lunch?)

2. Assign someone to keep score or a list of items from the following:

a) *License Plate Game*: An old favorite with a cooperative twist. See if your family can find all 50 states by the end of a vacation trip. Younger children can help by watching for different colored plates.

b) *Make-A-Meal*: Put together a fantasy menu by making a list of the crops you see growing and the types of animals grazing.

c) *Blue Cars, Red Cars*: See which color is more popular. Count the number of vehicles for a set time (short time for little ones). Are there more red or blue? More white or yellow?

d) *Mystery Art*: Fold a piece of paper in half in the same direction three times (when unfolded there will be eight sections of equal size). Start a picture on one section with ending lines just barely starting into the next one. Fold the paper so that the first section can't be seen. Second artist uses the beginning lines to make his/her drawing and continues the same way as the first artist. When all eight sections are filled, unfold the mystery drawing! ■

ROUND ROBIN STORIES

Purpose: Cooperate in an enjoyable family activity.

Procedure: This is an enjoyable activity when the family is together, or it can be used to pass time while traveling in a car or waiting in a station or office.

1. Suggest that the family make up a story together. One person can begin. Then each person adds a sentence or two in round robin fashion.

2. Try to see that no one criticizes anyone else's ideas, but rather use each idea as a challenge to build on.

Variations: Someone can record the story. Stories can be collected into a book or album of family stories. At another time, each person can insert a picture illustrating part of the story. ■

Adapted from: *The Child Development Project, San Ramon, California.*

THE HOW WOULD YOU FEEL GAME

Purpose: By thinking about and discussing how they would feel in hypothetical situations, family members increase their understanding of the effects of certain behaviors on other people.

Procedure: This is a good "time filler" to keep children occupied in a constructive way while driving in the car, waiting in an office, etc. It can be played with just one child and parent or with the entire family.

1. Say, "Let's play a game. I'll describe a situation and you tell me how you would feel in that situation."

2. Show interest in whatever responses children give. You can paraphrase and clarify to be sure that you understand the child's responses, but do not correct the response. (There are no right or wrong answers.)

3. Share with the child how you would feel in the situation.

4. With older children (5-13), probe for their reason for the feeling.

5. Expand this game to real-life situations. For example, if a child is about to do something on impulse, stop him/her and say something like, "Remember the 'How Would You Feel Game?' Well, how do you think (other person's name) will feel if you do that?"..."What could you do instead?"

Continued

In the Car

Note: This procedure can be used in real-life situations without having been played in game form first. It is sometimes good practice for children and parents, however, to think about people's reactions to certain behaviors in conflict-free situations as in a game.

Situations: You are a mother and your five year old daughter starts to cry while you're in the grocery store because you won't buy her any candy.

You have a friend come over to your house to play. He wants to play with your new video game but the last time he played with one of your toys, he broke it.

Your older brother won't let you play with him/her.

You are ten years old and you have friends over. Your five year old brother wants to play with you.

You are a parent and have had a hard day at work. As soon as you come in the door your children rush up to you and want to talk with you.

A friend calls you "Dummy."

A teacher (or one of your parents) accuses you of something you didn't do.

Everyone in the family wants to watch a different TV program. ■

Adapted from: *The Child Development Project, San Ramon, CA.*

FAMILY TRIP POSTER

Purpose: Children or entire family can work together in creating a poster depicting a family trip.

Procedure: 1. On a family trip, collect souvenirs, post cards from motels and places of interest, brochures from historic sites, etc.

2. When you return home, children or the entire family can glue the momentos onto a large piece of cardboard, perhaps from a dress box (or purchase poster or "railroad board" from art supply store). These can be glued in collage fashion or in the order of your trip connected with arrows.

Variations: 1. One way to encourage cooperation is to structure tasks so that there is a division of labor. For example, older children can outline your route on a map to be included on the poster and indicate where each site is located. Younger children can paste and help decide where momentos should be placed. Other family members might be responsible for lettering.

2. Use construction paper instead of cardboard and make an album or book. Staple or punch holes and tie with ribbon or yarn. Children can also write or dictate their experiences, either individually or jointly, next to the souvenirs. Making a book with experiences recorded can also be done along the route rather than after returning home. ■

Cooperative Activities

Outdoor Activities

Making Games Cooperative
Harvest Time
In the Garden
Snow Play

MAKING GAMES COOPERATIVE

Purpose: To teach children that cooperative play can be fun and that there needn't always be winners or losers.

Procedure: Several strategies can be used to encourage cooperation with games that may also be played competively. You can introduce these as new ways to play an old game.

1. Everyone can work together to beat an old record or score on a variety of games.
   a. *Pick-up Sticks:* Each person takes a turn to pick up *one* stick per turn. Keep a tally of sticks removed consecutively without disturbing another stick. See if players can beat the previous record of sticks picked up without moving another stick.
   b. *Catch, Volleyball, Badminton:* Keep track of the number of consecutive catches or volleys. See if players can beat their previous record for the whole group.
   c. *Alphabet Game*: While traveling in a car, family members try to spot signs e.g., ARCO. Keep track of the time or miles as you work from A to Z.

Variations: For variety, you may be able to adapt other games that your family plays to a cooperative format, either to beat a family record or personal record. ■

HARVEST TIME

Purpose: Family and friends pick and process local produce, just like the good old days!

Procedure: 1. Decide as a group what produce you would like to pick and process (jar, freeze, dry, etc.). Make sure to consider the amount of produce needed so that the processing goes smoothly and everyone can help.

2. Make a list of the tasks involved (e.g., picking, carrying, cleaning, slicing, cleaning up) and divide the work. Be realistic in terms of interest, abilities, and energy!

3. Make sure you have all the equipment you'll need for picking and processing.

4. Start early and enjoy your day!

Note: There are many ranches and farms in California that allow public harvest. A list of these farms, their addresses, phone numbers, a map, types of produce, and harvest dates can be obtained form the State Food and Agriculture Department. Contact the Direct Marketing Program, 1220 N Street, Sacramento, California 95816, (916) 445-5294. Ask for the current list of farmers. ■

Adapted from: *The Child Development Project, San Ramon, CA.*

IN THE GARDEN

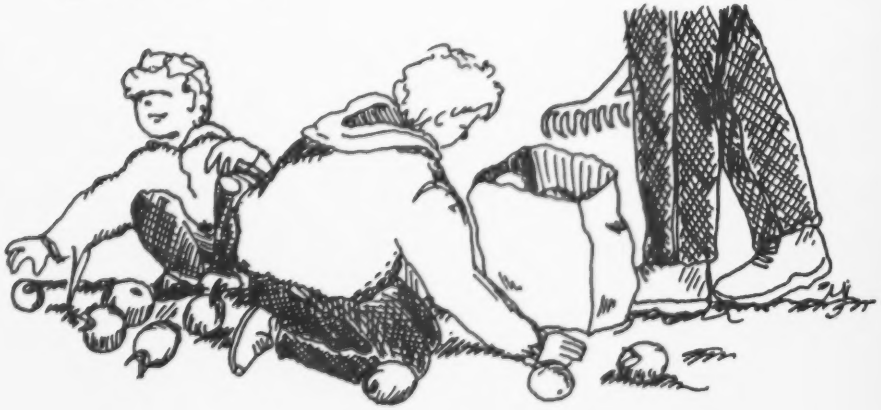
Purpose: To enjoy the pleasures of gardening as a family unit.

Procedure: 1. Collect child-size gardening tools from garage sales, toy stores, etc.

2. Have a water hose available—kids of all ages love playing with water.

3. Decide what jobs each family member can do. Little ones can help pick up fallen fruit or dig with supervision. Older children can rake, seed, plant, weed, or water. Parents can mow, prune, fertilize or do the more strenuous chores such as digging holes for large plants.

4. Try to set aside an afternoon or weekend day for the entire family to enjoy the sunshine and digging in "the good earth." ■

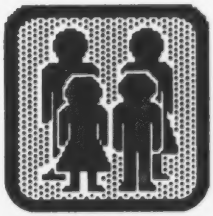


SNOW PLAY

Purpose: To have fun as a family or neighborhood group in the snow.

Procedure: If you are fortunate enough to live where it snows, consider painting the snow. Just take some food coloring or powder paints. Mix with water in plastic liquid soap bottles, and spray where you desire on the snow. Everyone can be an artist and the composite snow pictures are always great! ■

Cooperative Activities



Family Meetings

How to Begin
Things We Like to Do
Team Charades
What We Do to Help
Sharing Responsibilities
Helping Each Other More
Favorite Person

HOW TO BEGIN

Purpose: The family meeting is an excellent opportunity for all family members to share their thoughts and feelings, to make decisions as a family, and to cooperatively find solutions to problems.

Procedure: 1. As a parent, you will probably present the idea of having family meetings and get the meetings started. Everyone who has a stake in decisions affecting the daily life of the family should attend the meetings. Choose a time and place agreeable to all in a comfortable area preferably sitting around a large table.

2. The first family meeting should be a short one. It is a good idea to discuss only one "fun" item at this meeting such as to plan an outing or a pleasant activity together.

3. At the initial meeting, the oldest members can serve as the chairperson and secretary. The chairperson sees to it that everyone has a chance to air their feelings and be listened to, while the secretary writes what is said and decided. These roles should later be rotated to other family members. (Even a five year old can be chairperson with a little coaching and a good secretary.)

4. All decisions should be agreed upon as a whole. Do not vote - that will only divide the group and make for bitter feelings. If an agreement cannot be reached, table the problem until the next week. (If an urgent problem arises, parents may have to exercise their parental authority in making a decision.) All decisions made

Continued

must be followed until the next meeting time when a change may be made.

Note: Possible items for a family meeting may include:

- Planning an event
- Expressing feelings of anxiety, pressure, anger, frustration, pride, accomplishment, happiness
- Making up family rules (e.g. bedtime. chores, curfew)
- Dealing with breaking of family rules
- Negotiating new privileges
- Talking about issues (e.g. What does it mean to have a democratic family? What's the difference between fairness and love?)

Sample Agenda:

Compliments. Family members say thanks to each other for good deeds done or help given during the past week. This is also a time to recognize strengths and accomplishments and to give encouragement.

Minutes. Last meeting's secretary reads what took place at the last meeting.

Old Business. Discussion can be continued on items that were left unfinished at the last meeting.

Finances. Some families may discuss financial matters with their children during this time or pass out allowances.

New Business. Items that have been placed on a prior agenda can be addressed. (It's a good idea to post a blank agenda on the refrigerator or some other handy location for complaints and meeting items to be written as they are thought of.)

Treat. After the meeting is completed, the family stays together for a game, an outing, or a dessert together. ■

Adapted from: Popkin, Michael. *Active Parenting.* San Francisco, California: Harper and Row, 1987.

THINGS WE LIKE TO DO

Purpose: Families brainstorm lists of things they like to do together to share feelings and new ideas.

Procedure: 1. At a family meeting or gathering ask everyone to think about the things they like to do best as a family and new things they would like to try.

2. If you have an older child or two, ask one of them to act as recorder. If not, a parent will do.

3. Make a list of everyone's ideas noting those that have been repeated with a star each time they are mentioned.

4. Beside each item listed that *has been done* by your family, write the date you last did it.

5. Select one activity (either an old favorite or a new idea) to plan and do. Decide on a date, what preparations are necessary, and who will be responsible for each task. Remember to give everyone a share of the "getting ready" work! ■

TEAM CHARADES

Purpose: To learn how to work together as a team to convey through gestures the title of a book, movie, TV show or whatever topic is chosen.

Procedure: 1. Divide into groups of two. Decide on a topic.

2. Make sure everyone understands the rules, especially that no talking is allowed when titles are being acted out.

3. Each team gets its turn to try to get the rest of the family or audience to guess correctly the name they are acting out. It helps to have a topic that everyone is very familiar with and to try to act out titles that even the younger children can guess. Cartoons are especially fun to mime. ■

WHAT WE DO TO HELP

Purpose: To enable the family to recognize what they currently do to help each other. To encourage them to think of themselves individually as helpful people and collectively as a helping unit.

Procedure: 1. Find a time for discussion and explain that the discussion will be about family helping.

2. Ask:

a. What do we do in our family to help each other?
b. How do we go about helping each other?
c. How does each member feel about the help received and the help given?

3. Give each person an opportunity to speak but do not insist on participation. Respect and show interest in everyone's views. Adults can act as models by expressing their ideas without dominating the discussion and by encouraging others to speak. ■

Adapted from: *The Child Development Project, San Ramon, CA.*

SHARING RESPONSIBILITIES

Purpose: To find a way for each person to make a contribution to family chores and at the same time develop responsibility as a family member.

Procedure: 1. Find a time for discussion and explain that the discussion will be about sharing helping tasks.

2. With contributions from family members, make a list of daily chores, e.g., set table, help with dishes, take out garbage, feed the cat.

3. See if there are jobs that are too difficult for anyone--that need an older hand or that someone may need help with. See if there are times when someone cannot do a particular job, e.g., 5:00 music lesson means Sue isn't home in time to set the table on Tuesday, 7:00 Scout meeting means that Sam can't do clean-up on Wednesday.

4. Ask for suggestions as to the best way to divide jobs and rotate them so that everyone contributes a fair share. Jot down all ideas. Come to a consensus about the best solution to try.

5. Ask for suggestions about how to make a chart showing the solution. You may want to use a symbol for each job so each person's name can be posted next to a job (showing when each is to do each chore) and moved each week as job assignments change. ■

Adapted from: *The Child Development Project, San Ramon, CA.*

HELPING EACH OTHER MORE

Purpose: For family members to help each other in new ways by discussing what help each one wants and how the others can provide it.

Procedure: 1. Find a time for a family discussion and explain that it will be about how each person would like to be helped.

2. On a large sheet of paper list each person's response and how it's to be done.

3. Ask each person:

a. How would you like to be helped?
b. What skills, resources, and time are needed to have your wishes met?

4. Ask each person in the family, from the youngest to the oldest, how he/she might fulfill all or part of the wishes the other family members have for help.

5. Do not discount or discourage anyone's idea of how they want to be helped. Remember that help can be in the form of giving support as well as doing chores or carrying out responsibilities. Take each person's request seriously and help them to think of realistic ways in which family members could fulfill their wish.

6. Have each person choose one new helping responsibility and record "who, what, how, and when"

Continued

on the above list. If, after discussion, two people still want the same responsibility, decide which one will do it by a random selection (e.g., tossing a coin, drawing straws).

7. Meet again after a time to review and possibly modify the arrangements. Ask: How did it feel to help fulfill your wish or be helped? What else could we do as a family? ■

Adapted from: *The Child Development Project, San Ramon, CA.*

FAVORITE PERSON

Purpose: To focus on qualities we admire or like in others and help children think about things they can do to have these same qualities.

Procedure: 1. Begin discussion by asking family members:

a. Who is your favorite person (outside of the immediate family)? Children may respond with a character from books, television or movies. If so, you may want to repeat this activity asking for a "real person" i.e. someone they know.
b. Why? What do you like about him/her? What does this person do that others like?
c. Would you like to be like this person?
d. How could you be more like them?
e. How could you let your favorite person know what it is you like?

2. Children may give reasons like "She's popular," "She's rich," etc. for liking someone. If so, rather than correcting them, guide their thinking by mentioning the positive characteristics of someone *you* admire. (The more children know about the qualities you admire in others, the more likely they will be to develop those qualities *and* adopt your values.) ■

Where to Look for More Ideas

MORE INFORMATION

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Continued

GAMES TO PROMOTE COOPERATION

Animal Town Company, PO Box 2002, Santa Barbara, CA 93120.

Family Pastimes, R.R. 4, Perth, Ontario, Canada K7H 3C6.

SUPPORT GROUPS FOR COOPERATIVE LEARNING

California Association for Cooperation in Education, 125 Sylvar Avenue, Santa Cruz, California 95060.

International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education, 136 Liberty Street, Santa Cruz, California 95060.

Resources in Special Education, 650 University Avenue, Suite 201, Sacramento, California 95825.